



Butler - Auburn Redevelopment Plan Update

Part III : Existing Conditions



Wheat Street Gardens, looking West



Part 3 Issues And Opportunities

The inventory of existing conditions contains an assessment of the physical conditions for all properties within the Butler-Auburn project area based on the following categories: land use, building condition, building occupancy, and zoning. Additionally, two maps are provided highlighting major property ownership and development opportunities within the study area. The existing conditions analysis also extends to public space, with qualitative assessments made on the circulation and open space networks.

Existing conditions in Butler-Auburn were evaluated by compiling information into an extensive GIS database. The planning team conducted a windshield survey of all buildings and parcels within the study area; land use, building conditions and building occupancy were determined through this survey. Tax information and property ownership were derived from the Fulton County Tax Assessor database. Zoning was acquired from the City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning. The overall goal was to identify blocks of land conducive for redevelopment and buildings eligible for rehabilitation; the windshield survey provides a good basis for understanding the overall property condition in the neighborhood, and consequently future development and redevelopment opportunities. In addition, it provides the legal framework for reconfirming the area's status as containing 'slum and blight' as defined by official State of Georgia urban redevelopment legislation (as originally declared by city council resolution in 1994).

The study area is composed of 408 parcels, which make up 136.7 acres, and contains some of the most historically important buildings in the city. Much of the study area dates back to the beginning of the 20th century and was the site of much of the Civil Rights movement of the South.

Figure 3.0:
Hall's Service Station



(Image: GSU Archives, Lane Brother / Tracy O'Neil Collections)

3.1 Existing Land Use

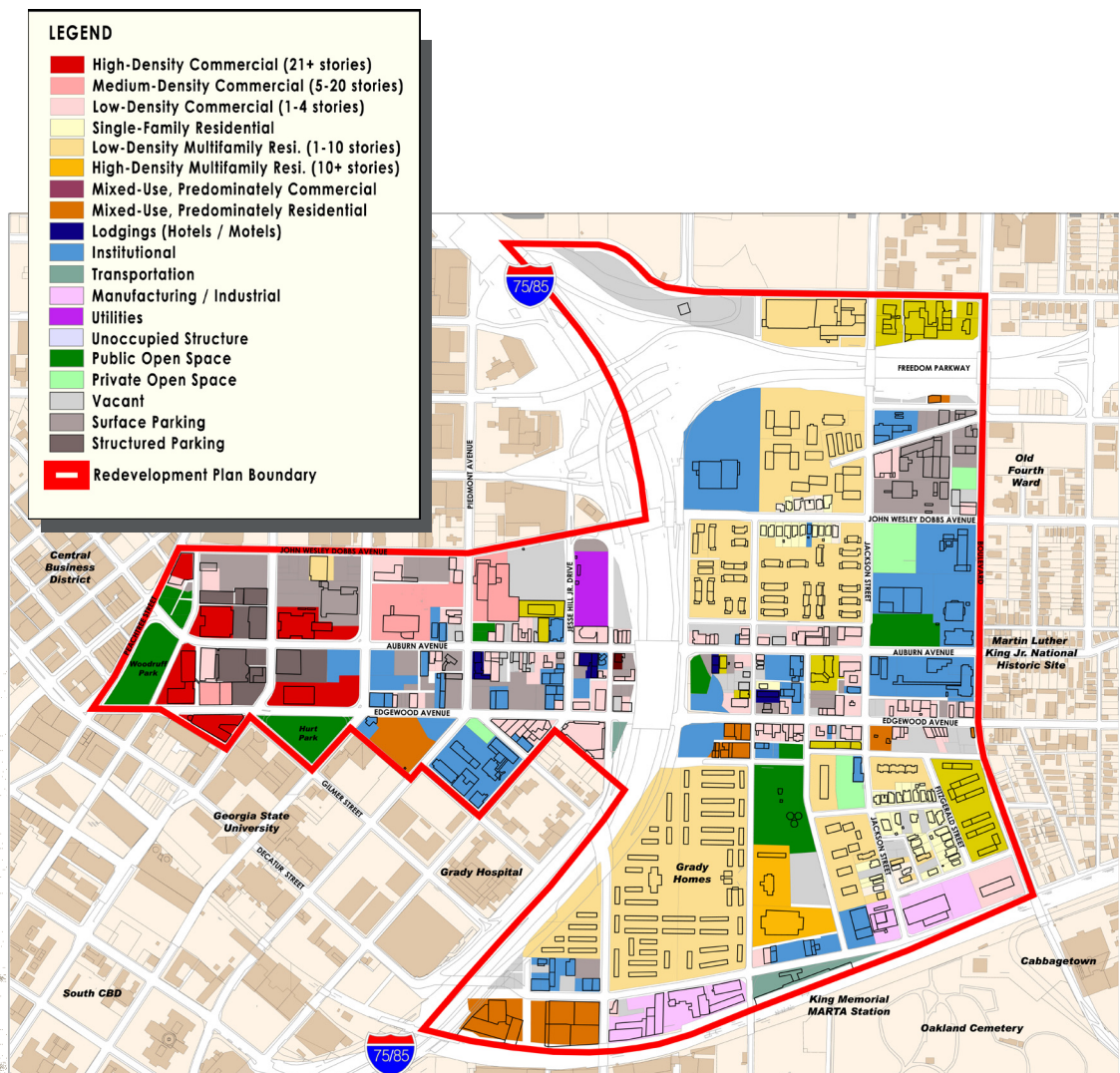
Within the study area, there are nineteen different land use categories, including Commercial, Institutional, Mixed-Use, Multifamily Residential, Single-Family Residential, Parking, and Open Space. The most prevalent land use is institutional, making up 22% of the land area. The majority of this land use is represented by several major religious institutions in the area, including Big Bethel AME Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and Wheat Street Baptist Church, as well as some large historical landmarks such as the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site visitor center, the King Center for Non-Violent Social Change, and the Butler Street YMCA.

Commercial land uses make up approximately 21% of the study area and are primarily comprised of low-density storefront retail along Auburn and Edgewood Avenues.

18% of the study area is made up of multifamily residential uses, which are primarily represented in a few large developments such as Wheat Street Gardens and the Atlanta Overlook apartments. Single-family residential makes up less than 1% of the area.

Open space makes up 10% of the study area, while surface parking lots and parking decks comprise 17%. Almost 6% of the area is vacant land.

Figure 3.1:
Existing Land Use



3.2 Existing Zoning

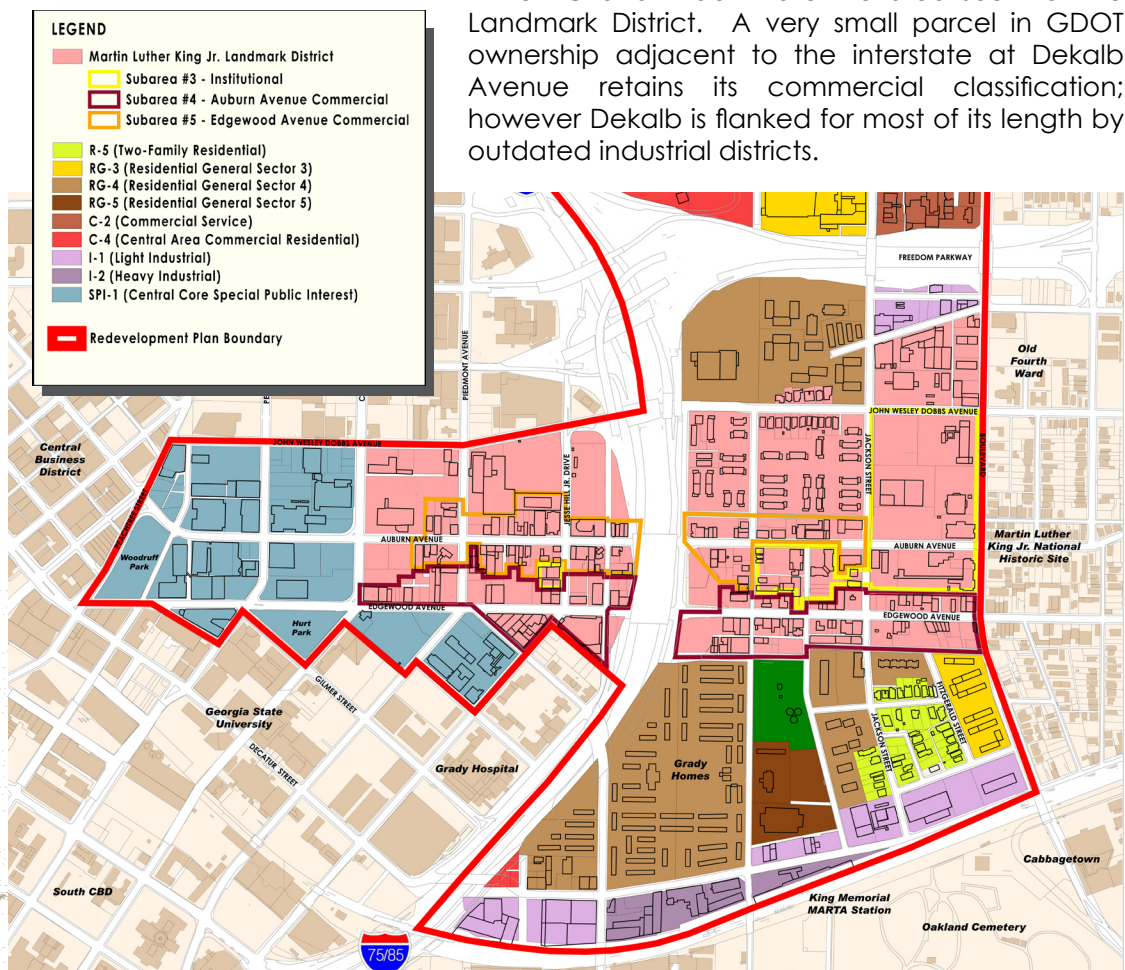
The Auburn Avenue Redevelopment Plan area is made up of three primary zoning districts 'types': the Martin Luther King Jr. Landmark District, a revised SPI-1, and eight conventional zoning districts. Parts of the study area are in the midst of ongoing 'quality-of-life' revisions and changes, whereas other parts have yet to receive similar redesignations.

The area west of Interstate 75/85 is part of the Downtown Special Public Interest District (SPI). This SPI is the oldest in the city and is in transition. For the past two years the Bureau of Planning, along with Central Atlanta Progress (CPAP) has been revising and updating SPI-1 to include, among other things, quality-of-life standards that form the backbone of the most recent new zoning districts. The updated SPI is scheduled to be sent to Council to begin the adoption process within the next month.

The Landmark District straddles the interstate and is administered by the Atlanta Urban Design Commission (AUDC), which protects the historic integrity of the Auburn Avenue and Edgewood Avenue corridors. The District is made up of six separate subareas – an Auburn Avenue residential subarea; a general residential subarea; an institutional subarea; commercial subareas for both Auburn and Edgewood; and a transitional zone.

The remaining pieces of the study area are comprised of several conventional City of Atlanta zoning districts. A mixture of RG and C zoning classifications make up the portion of the area north of the Landmark District and south of Freedom Parkway, while RG and R dominate the area south of the Landmark District. A very small parcel in GDOT ownership adjacent to the interstate at Dekalb Avenue retains its commercial classification; however Dekalb is flanked for most of its length by outdated industrial districts.

Figure 3.2:
Existing Zoning



3.3 Existing Building Condition

Buildings were evaluated based on appearance and neighborhood context without taking into account any interior renovations or unseen problems. The physical evaluation of the building included a visual survey of the foundation (cracks, settlement), roof conditions, siding (paint, rotted wood, damaged masonry), doors and windows (broken glass) and porches. The assessment was also based on the relative condition of surrounding buildings. The categories are as follows:

Standard: Building in sound condition or requires only minor repairs such as painting and landscaping.

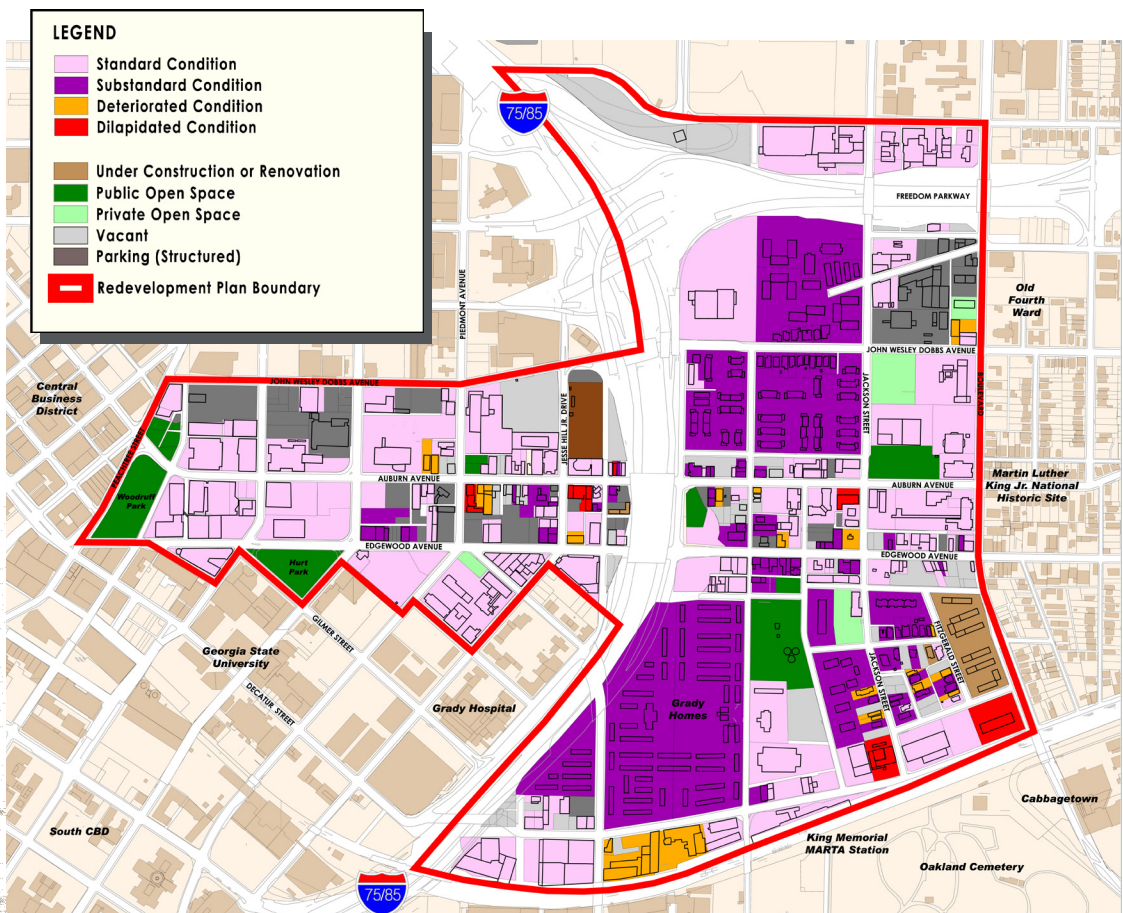
Substandard: Building requires some level of general repair (i.e. renovation cost \$5,000 - \$15,000 for a single-family house)

Deteriorated: Building requires major repairs such as a new roof, foundation, siding or windows (more than three identified problems; renovation cost \$15,000-- \$45,000)

Dilapidated: Building needs extensive rehabilitation and may require demolition (renovation cost is greater than \$45,000)

Overall, parcels with buildings in 'standard' condition are dominant, at 150 of the 259 non-vacant, non-parking parcels – or 58% of the built environment. However, several 'substandard' properties are very large, including Wheat Street Gardens and Grady Homes. When comparing acreage, the percentage of properties in 'standard' condition drops to about half, or 51%. 'Substandard' properties total 70 acres or 44%, while 8.7 acres or 5% of the total acreage is either 'deteriorated' or 'dilapidated'. It is also possible that there are interior repairs needed even in 'standard' properties that would not be apparent from an exterior windshield survey but would negatively affect the overall condition.

Figure 3.3:
Existing Building
Condition



3.4 Existing Building Occupancy

Along with the survey of building condition, each property was checked for signs of habitation. The following designations were used to evaluate building occupancy:

Occupied: This designation is based on clear evidence of habitation by legitimate occupants. Indicators include a well-maintained yard, cars parked the driveway, curtains in the windows, the presence of children's play equipment, the presence of deliveries such as mail, newspapers, etc. Commercial/industrial structures were assessed based on signs of business, employees and cars in the parking lots.

Unoccupied: This designation is based on clear evidence of the lack of legitimate occupants. The evidence includes an obviously unoccupied for-sale or for-rent dwelling or structure, missing or broken doors or windows, clear abandonment, being boarded up, etc.

Partially Occupied: This designation was applicable only to buildings designed to house two or more tenants such as duplexes and commercial structures. As above, it is based on evidence of habitation by legitimate occupants and uses the same criteria.

While almost 76% of the parcels in the study area were observed to contain 'occupied' buildings, over 24% of the parcels appear to have unoccupied or only partially occupied structures. This is a relatively high number given the area's prime location within Downtown Atlanta and creates an overall sense of neglect and disinvestment. On the other hand, this also represents some opportunities to target redevelopment efforts.

Figure 3.4:
Existing Building
Occupancy

